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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1385
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S E C R E T LIMA 000639

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2034
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: SHINING PATH IN THE VRAE: GOALS, METHODS, AND NEW
ANTI-US RHETORIC

REF: A. LIMA 543
[1](#)B. LIMA 329

Classified By: Amb. P Michael McKinley for reasons 1.4b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Although most observers describe the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso or SL) faction operating in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE) as little more than narcotraffickers, several analysts argue convincingly that the faction maintains political goals more akin to those of a terrorist organization. One prominent counter-drug analyst told poloff that SL's primary goal is to create a liberated area in the VRAE where SL governs and the state has no presence. Others said the VRAE SL may even compete for municipal offices in the next election. VRAE SL reportedly complements its military efforts in the VRAE with political work by cadres operating in the capital of Ayacucho region and with an extensive propaganda effort that has adopted strident anti-US rhetoric, which is a matter for concern. End Summary.

Regional Political Goals

[1](#)2. (SBU) Although a majority of observers describe the SL faction ("Proseguir") operating in the VRAE as little more than a powerful narcotrafficking organization (ref A), several analysts argue convincingly that the faction maintains political goals more akin to those of a terrorist organization. According to this view, SL's current political goals are less sweeping and ambitious than the ones it espoused during its heyday in the early 1990s, but they remain centrally important in motivating the group's operations. One prominent counter-drug analyst, Ruben Vargas, in a recent media interview argued that "to reduce them (SL) to a firm of narcos is simply absurd. This is a new Shining Path that recognizes its limited abilities. Their military and political strategies are not to take power but to take control over specific areas."

[1](#)3. (S) Vargas (strictly protect) told poloff that SL's primary goal is to create a liberated area in the VRAE where SL governs and the state has no presence, similar to the liberated area established by the Colombian FARC in the late-1990s. In a recent written manifesto, VRAE SL described its stronghold in Vizcatan as its Democratic Revolutionary Support Base, which evidence from other sources suggests SL may be successfully expanding. One DAO source reported that SL has established four "hospitals" (probably rudimentary clinics) in the VRAE, and another said that SL had developed

revolutionary schools to teach SL children. In a recent media interview, VRAE SL's chief "Jose" bragged that these "popular schools" educate locals in Maoist ideology and about the "enemies" of the VRAE because "education is the path to freedom." The manifesto also claimed the group has established a system of taxation to pay for its operations and services.

¶4. (S) SL may also be looking to establish more formal, legal power in the VRAE. In a recent conversation with the Ambassador, opposition leader Ollanta Humala reported that his sources say SL is planning to run candidates for municipal office in the VRAE. The SL candidates will run under a different name, but locals will know the difference. A security consultant with contacts throughout the VRAE also reported that SL plans to run candidates in local elections in alliance with seemingly legitimate parties. He said they will nominate candidates throughout the VRAE in both Ayacucho and other bordering regions. One possibility, he said, was a link with the pro-coca party Hatun Tarpuy, which won several municipalities in the northern VRAE during the 2006 elections.

Building Urban Cadres

¶5. (S) VRAE SL complements its efforts in the jungle with political work by cadres operating in Huamanga city, Ayacucho's capital, said Vargas. He claimed that the SL "Proseguir" faction has several openly affiliated operatives working in Ayacucho social movements. These operatives are distinct from known operatives of the SL "Acuerdista" faction that accepted SL founder Abimael Guzman's call in the 1990s for a negotiated peace and the two factions are continuously

competing for recruits. Vargas alleged that the main leader is Rigoberto Garcia Ortega, who heads the Ayacucho Regional Front, a social movement that foments protests and harshly criticizes the GOP. Vargas added that "Proseguir" is also competing for and winning away recruits from the "Acuerdistas" in Huamanga's university and prison.

Propagating the Ideology

¶6. (S) Vargas argued that VRAE SL's extensive propaganda effort shows that it retains its political motives. The faction in November 2008 produced a 45-page document, sprinkled with quotes from Mao, Che, and Marx, that lambasts capitalism, globalization, and imperialism. The manifesto called VRAE SL a "Popular Revolutionary Army of Workers, Peasants, and Students" that is continuing the revolutionary battle that SL launched in 1980, and that is the only authentic descendent of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) founded in 1928. The document rails against other factions that claim to be the PCP or SL, including SL founder Abimael Guzman. VRAE SL also claims to support domestic and foreign private investment as long as indigenous peoples are allowed to decide the terms of contracts. SL regularly promotes its ideology via "armed propaganda" -- distributing leaflets throughout the VRAE and lecturing travelers at roadblocks before releasing them. According to intelligence sources reported in the press, VRAE SL devoted more than 25% of its activities from January to April 2009 on propaganda activities.

Anti-US Discourse

¶7. (C) VRAE SL over the past six months has adopted a more strident anti-US discourse. According to the security consultant, the USG's New Horizons military-humanitarian mission -- conducted from June to August 2008 -- reinforced SL's conviction that the US was planning to invade the VRAE. When the Peruvian military launched its Operation Excellence to take control of the northern VRAE (ref B) immediately after New Horizons ended, SL apparently concluded that the operation was guided by the US. Then in its November manifesto, SL declared that the formerly "popular agrarian democratic war" had changed to a "national anti-imperialist, anti-Yankee, resistance" and called for the development of a "United Democratic Revolutionary Anti-Yankee-Imperialist

Front."

18. (C) VRAE SL commander "Jose" amplified this anti-US rhetoric in two recent interviews with local media. In the first, Jose accused the US Southern Command of militarizing the VRAE in search of natural resources, and called on Peruvians to join together to eject the "Yankees" from Peru, South America, and the world. In the second interview, Jose said that SL's mission is to fight against anyone that is aligned with the USG, particularly the Peruvian army and police. He even said that if the army changed sides to defend Peru against "the Yankee invasion", SL would fight alongside the army. SL leaflets recently distributed in the VRAE also reportedly used similar rhetoric: "Long Live the War of anti-Yankee, anti-imperialist National Resistance!"

Comment: SL and Anti-Imperialism

19. (S) VRAE SL's adoption of "imperialism" and the U.S. itself as central rhetorical targets is a concern. We have no evidence or reporting to suggest SL is preparing to move from rhetoric to action on this front (its main physical targets in recent years have been members of Peru's security forces -- military and police). But judging from SL's actions in the early part of the decade, particularly a 2002 bombing not far from the U.S. Embassy that many attribute to SL, such a possibility in the future cannot be wholly ruled out.

MCKINLEY